

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 10-13, and 20 have been amended. Claims 4, 5, 7, 14, 15, and 17 are withdrawn from consideration as being directed to non-elected species. New dependent claims 21-26 have been added. Written description support for amended claims 1-3, 10-13, and 20 and new claims 21-26 is found throughout Applicant's original specification, for example, at page 2, line 23 to page 3, line 2; at page 6, line 20 to page 9, line 10; and at FIGS. 1 and 3-5. No new matter has been added by these amendments. Accordingly, claims 1-3, 6, 8-13, 16, and 18-26 (including amended independent claims 1 and 11) are pending and subject to examination in the application.

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for participating in a telephonic interview on November 1, 2005, in which the subject matter of independent claim 1 and the description of the specification and FIGS. 1 and 3 were discussed. In light of that discussion, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-3, 6, 8-13, 16, and 18-26 are in condition for allowance.

Amendments to the Specification

The specification has been amended to more fully describe the original FIGS. 1 and 3. As discussed during the telephonic interview, these amendments to the specification merely describe features that were already disclosed in originally filed FIGS. 1 and 3. As such, no new matter has been added by these amendments.

Amended Independent Claims 1 and 11

Independent claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,947,812 to Henning et al. ("Henning"). The Office Action also cited European Patent EP 1099598 to Steen Manfred ("Manfred") and U.S. Patent No. 6,364,388 to Ziegler et al. ("Ziegler") in rejections of certain dependent claims. Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 1 and 11 are patentable over Henning, Manfred, Ziegler, and all other prior art of record.

Amended claim 1 describes an air return bulkhead including a peripheral portion adapted to abut a wall of a trailer and a panel coupled to and offset from the peripheral portion. The air return bulkhead also includes “means for releasably securing the peripheral portion in abutment with the wall such that the bulkhead is secured to the wall in an elevated position above a floor of the trailer and such that the bulkhead may be manually removed and reinstalled without the use of handheld tools.”

Unlike amended claim 1, Henning does not disclose means for releasably securing the peripheral portion in abutment with the wall “such that the bulkhead is secured to the wall in an elevated position above a floor of the trailer and such that the bulkhead may be manually removed and reinstalled without the use of handheld tools.” Instead, Henning teaches that an air return bulkhead includes tapered sections 32 or 232 that define pallet stops 36 extending down to the trailer floor to receive the impact from the pallets that are loaded on the floor of the trailer. (Henning at col. 3, lines 50-67; FIGS. 4-5 and 14.)

Both Manfred and Ziegler fail to disclose the aforementioned subject matter missing from the teaching of Henning. Unlike amended claim 1, neither Manfred nor Ziegler disclose “means for releasably securing the peripheral portion in abutment with the wall such that the bulkhead is secured to the wall in an elevated position above a floor of the trailer and such that the bulkhead may be manually removed and reinstalled without the use of handheld tools.” Instead, Manfred discloses a panel that is secured to horizontal crossbars 6 and 7 using downwardly facing hooks 3 and 4. (Manfred at FIGS. 1, 2a, and 2c.) Ziegler merely discloses the use of rivets to fasten the bulkhead to the trailer wall (requiring a “powered rivet gun” or other tool) so that the “pallet stops impede the forward movement of pallets as they are placed on the bottom trailer panel.” (Ziegler at col. 1, lines 30-31; col. 4, lines 25-29; col. 4, lines 48-50.) Just like Henning, both Manfred and Ziegler fail to describe “means for releasably securing the peripheral portion in abutment with the wall such that the bulkhead is secured to the wall in an elevated position above a floor of the trailer and such that the bulkhead may be manually removed and reinstalled without the use of handheld tools,” as described in amended claim 1.

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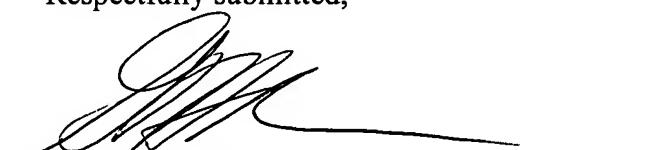
Applicants respectfully submit that amended claim 1 and associated dependent claims 2-3, 6, 8-10, and 21-23 are patentable over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance.

Amended claim 11 describes an air return bulkhead including a peripheral portion adapted to abut a wall of a trailer and a panel coupled to and offset from the peripheral portion. The bulkhead also includes a plurality of mounting members to releasably secure the flanges peripheral portion in abutment with the wall such that the bulkhead is secured to the wall in an elevated position above a floor of the trailer and such that the bulkhead may be manually removed and reinstalled without the use of handheld tools. As previously described, Henning, Manfred, and Ziegler fail to describe a bulkhead that is releasably secured to the trailer wall "such that the bulkhead is secured to the wall in an elevated position above a floor of the trailer and such that the bulkhead may be manually removed and reinstalled without the use of handheld tools," as described in amended claim 11. Applicants respectfully submit that amended claim 11 and associated dependent claims 12-13, 16, 18-20, and 24-26 are patentable over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance.

Enclosed is a \$225.00 check for the Petition for Extension of Time fee. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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